WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT AFGHANISTAN??

AFGHANISTAN BACKGROUND (1978-2009)
Around 1978, the Afghan Communist Party was created. They proclaimed independence from Soviets, who were currently in control of the country, and declared their policies to be based on Islamic principles, Afghan nationalism, and socioeconomic justice. At the same time, conservative Islamic and ethnic leaders who objected to social changes introduced by the Afghan Communist Party began an armed revolt in the countryside. The guerrilla movement Mujahadeen was created to battle the Soviet-backed Communist government.

To bolster its faltering Communist regime, the USSR invaded Afghanistan on Dec. 24, touching off a long and destructive war. Widespread opposition to the Soviets spawned violent public demonstrations. By early 1980, the Mujahadeen rebels had united against Soviet invaders and the USSR-backed Afghan Army. Afghan guerrillas gained control of rural areas, and Soviet troops held urban areas. The Mujahadeen received arms from the United States, Britain, and China via Pakistan.

The USSR withdrew in 1989 under relentless pressure by internationally supported anti-communist Mujahadeen rebels. The Mujahadeen, already beginning to fracture as warlords fought over the future of Afghanistan, formed a largely Islamic state. However, constant in-fighting eroded their unity and caused a series of subsequent civil wars, which eventually resulted in Kabul falling in 1996 to the Taliban, a hardline Pakistani-sponsored movement that emerged in 1994 to end the country's civil war and anarchy.

Newly formed Islamic militia, the Taliban, rose to power on promises of peace. Most Afghans, exhausted by years of drought, famine and war, approved of the Taliban for upholding traditional Islamic values. However, their interpretation of Islamic values was very harsh. The Taliban outlawed cultivation of poppies for the opium trade, cracked down on crime, and curtailed the education and employment of women. Women were required to be fully veiled and were not allowed outside alone. The Taliban’s Islamic law was enforced via public vicious executions and amputations.

The United States refused to recognize the authority of the Taliban. Following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, a US, Allied, and anti-Taliban Northern Alliance military action toppled the Taliban for sheltering Osama BIN LADIN. A UN-sponsored Conference in 2001 established a process for political reconstruction that included the adoption of a new constitution, a presidential election in 2004, and National Assembly elections in 2005.

In December 2004, Hamid KARZAI became the first democratically elected president of Afghanistan, and the National Assembly was inaugurated the following December. KARZAI was re-elected in August 2009 for a second term. Despite gains toward building a stable central government, a resurgent Taliban and continuing provincial instability - particularly in the south and the east - remain serious challenges for the Afghan Government.

GEOGRAPHY
Location: Southern Asia, north and west of Pakistan, east of Iran
Climate: arid to semiarid; cold winters and hot summers (temps can vary from 23degrees F-93degreesF)
Terrain: mostly rugged mountains; plains in north and southwest
Land Use: 11.95% of land is arable

ECONOMY, PEOPLE, AND SOCIETY
Afghanistan's economy is recovering from decades of conflict. The economy has improved significantly since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001 largely because of the infusion of international assistance, the recovery of the agricultural sector, and service sector growth.

Despite the progress of the past few years, Afghanistan is extremely poor, landlocked, and highly dependent on foreign aid. Much of the population continues to suffer from shortages of housing, clean water, electricity, medical care, and jobs. Criminality, insecurity, weak governance, lack of infrastructure, and the Afghan Government’s difficulty in extending rule of law to all parts of the country pose challenges to future economic growth.
Afghanistan's living standards are among the lowest in the world. The international community remains committed to Afghanistan's development, pledging over $67 billion at nine donors' conferences between 2003-10. In July 2012, the donors at the Tokyo conference pledged an additional $16 billion in civilian aid through 2015.

Despite this help, the Government of Afghanistan will need to overcome a number of challenges, including low revenue collection, anemic job creation, high levels of corruption, weak government capacity, and poor public infrastructure. Afghanistan's growth rate slowed markedly in 2013.

**Life expectancy at birth:** 50.49 years  
**Life expectancy World Comparison Ranking:** 220 (to keep it in perspective, there are only 223 countries and Afghanistan is fourth from the bottom; the country of Chad is at the very bottom with a life expectancy of 49.44 years)  
**Infant mortality Rate:** 117.23 deaths/1,000 live birth  
**Infant mortality Rate World Comparison Ranking:** 1 (the US is 169 on this list with 6.17 deaths/1000 live births)

**Age Structure (see chart below):**

![Age Structure Diagram](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html)
WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT AFGHANISTAN???
USE THE INFORMATION ON THIS HANDOUT TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:
1. Why was an “armed revolt” created? What was the group/movement called and who were they opposing?

2. How did the Taliban gain control of Afghanistan? What group did the Taliban kick out of power when they took over? What laws did they establish while they were in control?

3. What does the information tell you about the climate and terrain in Afghanistan? Is farming a viable career choice?

4. What does the article tell you about life expectancy in Afghanistan? What does the chart tell you about life expectancy in Afghanistan?

5. Overall, if you had to describe to someone what it has been like to live in Afghanistan the last 30 years or so, what words would you use?